

Message Text

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TO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 063043

NODIS

FOL REPEAT PORT AU PRINCE 1007 ACTION SECSTATE DTD 21 MAR.

QUOTE

S E C R E T PORT AU PRINCE 1007

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PINS, HA

SUBJECT: REPORTED PLANS TO OVERTHROW DUVALIER GOVERNMENT

REF: (A) STATE 061960, (B) PORT AU PRINCE 0964

1. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE FROM OUR PREVIOUS EXCHANGES, WE STRONGLY CONCUR THAT THE CASE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN HAITI WILL BEST BE SERVED BY EVOLUTIONARY CHANGE WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF POLITICAL STABILITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

2. AT THE SAME TIME WE FIND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SITUATION

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 063043

NOW EXISTING AND THAT OF EARLY 1976, WHEN WE CONVEYED IN GENERAL TERMS WARNING OF WELL ORGANIZED PLOTTING TO OVERTHROW DUVALIER GOVERNMENT. THESE DIFFERENCES, OUTLINED BELOW, SUGGEST THAT IT WOULD BE UNWISE AT LEAST IN THIS INSTANCE TO CONVEY ANOTHER WARNING AND THAT IN FACT OUR INTERESTS IN PROMOTING THE CAUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS MIGHT BE DAMAGED IF WE WERE TO PASS SUCH A REPORT BASED ON WHAT WE NOW KNOW.

3. IN THE FIRST PLACE, THE SOURCE OF THIS INFORMATION IS LOCATED WITHIN THE COUNTRY RATHER THAN AMONG HAITIAN EXILES ABROAD. HE HAPPENS TO BE AMONG THE MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE FOREFRONT OF ADVOCATING GREATER RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND MORE VIGOROUS ATTEMPTS TO ELIMINATE CORRUPTION; HE HAS BEEN WARNED BY SECURITY OFFICIALS AND QUESTIONED WHETHER U.S. EMBASSY IS PROVIDING HIM GUIDANCE. SECURITY SERVICES, STIMULATED BY ANOTHER COUP WARNING FROM US, COULD EASILY STRIKE OUT AT ALL SUSPECTED OPPOSITIONISTS SUCH AS SOURCE. ARRESTS, IN PRESENT ATMOSPHERE, WOULD BE INTERPRETED AT LEAST IN SOME QUARTERS AS HAVING BEEN BROUGHT ABOUT BY U.S. "BETRAYAL," BEARING OUT THE MYTHOLOGY ABOUT THE CAUSE OF EARLIER COUP FAILURES. SUCH A RESULT WOULD BE PARTICULARLY DAMAGING AT THIS TIME BECAUSE DISSIDENT HAITIANS SEE THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS AS AFFORDING THEM A NEW DIMENSION OF PROTECTION IN THEIR EFFORTS TO LIBERALIZE HAITIAN SOCIETY AND CORRECT LONG-STANDING ABUSES. IN SHORT, A U.S. COUP WARNING AT THIS POINT WOULD RUN REAL RISK OF MAKING US A PARTY TO GOH REPRISALS AND POLICE ACTION AGAINST INNOCENTS AS WELL AS THE GUILTY.

4. AS ANOTHER LONG-STANDING FACTOR COUNSELING PRUDENCE, WE RECOMMEND THE RATHER WIDESPREAD FEELING AMONG THE PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS CLASSES THAT THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY FOR LIFE IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY ANACHRONISTIC, AND THE EXPECTATION THAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION IN WASHINGTON

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 063043

WILL DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY SPEED THE DAY WHEN MORE DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL CONDITIONS MAY BE INTRODUCED TO HAITI. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO HAITI SENATOR BROOKE TOLD PRESIDENT DUVALIER THAT THE PRESIDENCY FOR LIFE MUST END OR AMERICAN AID WOULD BE CURTAILED; A VARIATION OF THIS THEME IS THAT BROOKE URGED THAT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS BE HELD NEXT YEAR. THUS, THE WINDS OF CHANGE IN THE UNITED STATES, AS SO OFTEN IN THE PAST, ARE HAVING THEIR EFFECT ON HAITIAN POLITICAL CALCULATIONS.

5. STILL ANOTHER FACTOR DESERVING MENTION IS THAT THE GOH'S MALADROIT RECORD OF ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE OVER THE PAST YEAR HAS GIVEN RISE TO WIDESPREAD CRITICISM, ONLY SOMEWHAT ALLEVIATED BY THE RECOGNITION THAT DROUGHT CONDITIONS THROUGHOUT HISPANIOLA FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS WOULD HAVE CAUSED ANY GOVERNMENT MAJOR PROBLEMS. WHETHER THE RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS UNDER THE PRESIDENT'S LEADERSHIP CAN ACT IN A MORE DECISIVE AND FARSIGHTED MANNER AND WHETHER THE ENERGY, INFLATION, AND FOOD CRISES CAN BE SOLVED

WITHIN A REASONABLE PERIOD OF TIME WILL DETERMINE WHETHER IMPATIENCE WITH THE AUTOCRATIC DUVALIERIST RULE WILL SPREAD INTO THE RANKS OF THE OFFICER CORPS AND SAP THE LOYALTY OF KEY OFFICERS TO THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP.

6. FINALLY, PROSPECTS FOR AN EARLY MOVE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT STIMULATED BY THE CURRENT ENERGY CRISIS HAVE DECLINED, ACCORDING TO THE SAME SOURCE. JUDGING FROM CONVERSATIONS OF THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS, THE SOURCE IMPLIES THAT THE MILITARY IS NOT READY TO ACT AND THAT THEY EXPECT THE GOVERNMENT TO GET THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL SOON.

7. FOR ALL THESE REASONS, WE SUGGEST THAT WE NOT REPEAT NOT CONVEY A WARNING TO DUVALIER AT THIS TIME. IN ANY FURTHER TALKS WITH SOURCE, WE INTEND, SUBJECT TO DEPARTMENT'S CONCURRENCE, TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT OUR ROUTINE CONVERSATIONS WITH HIM SHOULD IN NO WAY BE INTERPRETED AS APPROVAL FOR ANY COUP
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 063043

ATTEMPT; THAT WE ARE IN NO WAY ENCOURAGING THE OVERTHROW OF GOVERNMENTS AND THAT WE HAVE NOT AGREED WITH ANY HAITIAN COUP PLOTTERS THAT WE WILL "LOOK THE OTHER WAY," SHOULD THEY ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW DUVALIER.
ISHAM

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